

Dear Neighbors,

The 2005 legislative session has concluded, and we did much to protect the quality of life for residents of this great state. Legislators approved measures that will devote additional resources to our public schools, clean up our air and water, and improve our roads. And we did it all without a general tax increase, even while faced with one of the worst budget deficits in memory.

This session was particularly fruitful for education. As chair of the Senate Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education Committee, it is my top priority to make sure Washington families have access to a world-class public education system and students are able to meet our state's high academic standards. This session we boosted higher education enrollment significantly and invested in reducing class sizes, helping struggling students and giving teachers cost-of-living adjustments. We also dedicated a record amount of money to building safe, modern public school facilities.

Further, we took several steps to make sure every child in Washington has access to quality health care, which is important to ensuring a good educational experience. Children excel when they are healthy and ready to learn.

Inside this newsletter, you'll find more details about what we accomplished this session. It is an honor to represent the 1st Legislative District, and I encourage you to continue contacting my office with questions or ideas.

Sincerely,



Rosemary McAuliffe

STATE SENATOR

**Rosemary
McAuliffe**



1st LEGISLATIVE
DISTRICT

**LEGISLATIVE
REPORT**

Education

This was a banner year for Washington schools. Senate Democrats chose to look at education as one articulated system that begins with early childhood education programs and continues through K-12 on to higher education. We pledged to help students succeed, wherever they are on the learning continuum.

Early Learning

We established an early learning council in the governor's office to give parents more comprehensive information on quality early learning options in Washington. Children have a better chance at academic success when they are given educational opportunities in their early years.

K-12

I'm particularly pleased that we made the commitment in the 2005-2007 operating budget to fund Initiative 728 and Initiative 732 by establishing the Education Legacy Trust Fund. These two voter-approved measures reduce class sizes and give teachers well-deserved cost-of-living adjustments.

Both initiatives have been suspended in recent years, but it was impor-

tant to find the money to pay for them. We need to offer good wages if we are to attract high-quality teachers, and we need to make sure our public school classrooms are not overcrowded and children receive the help they need. Revenue from the cigarette tax and the reinstated estate tax will be devoted to the trust fund.

The Legislature also approved Senate Bill 5441, which calls for a comprehensive study of the way we pay for public education in our state, including early learning, K-12 schools, and our state colleges and universities. The budget includes \$1.7 million for this study. This will give us the tools to determine how we can best support our schools and whether we are spending every state education dollar efficiently.

The state capital budget increases the number of square feet per student and the dollars per square foot for eligible school construction projects, earmarking a record \$600 million for school construction in the 2005-2007 biennium. Students learn best in safe, modern facilities.

"Education" continued inside

Higher Education

Legislators had to answer an important question this session: How do we maintain the high quality of our public colleges and universities while keeping tuition affordable? We need an additional 26,000 enrollment slots by 2010 just to keep up with current demand. And with the class of 2008 the largest high school graduating class in our state's history, that need is only going to grow in the coming years.

We took a big step toward addressing this enrollment crunch this session by expanding access to baccalaureate degrees at our four-year schools, branch campuses, and community and technical colleges. The operating budget includes 7,900 additional enrollment slots. House Bill 1794 allows some branch campuses to begin offering lower-level courses, and it sets up a pilot program for community and technical colleges to offer bachelor's degrees in high-demand fields.

The budget boosts enrollment at the University of Washington-Bothell by 75 full-time equivalent students in fis-

cal year 2006 and by 200 (of which 125 is lower-division) in fiscal year 2007.

We also worked to keep college tuition affordable: We expanded funding for the State Need Grant by \$70 million to reach families at 65 percent of median family income, or \$43,000 for a family of four. More Washington families than ever before will be eligible for the program.

Among other education victories this session, lawmakers:

- Boosted special education funding by more than \$10 million and created a special education ombudsman program within the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to direct parents and teachers to resources for children with special education needs.
- Increased funding for the Learning Assistance Program, which helps students struggling with basic skills, by \$25 million and changed the funding formula so that money is distributed to school districts based entirely on poverty rather than test scores. Districts should not



Sen. McAuliffe speaks to elementary students at a ceremony for her child abduction prevention program.

be penalized financially for improving test scores.

- Provided \$677,000 to help schools implement model dyslexia teaching programs and passed a bill that requires school principals to work with staff to assure they receive training in teaching students with dyslexia, dysgraphia and other learning difficulties.

Working to solve homelessness

I co-sponsored bold legislation this session aimed at reducing homelessness by at least half during the next decade. An estimated 25,000 Washington residents are without shelter on any given night. This unacceptably high number includes families with children, people who are mentally ill or drug-addicted, and people who hold down jobs that simply don't pay enough to cover the ever-rising cost of decent housing. It includes those who find themselves short on rent for a month, and others who frequently cycle through emergency rooms and the corrections system, costing taxpayers millions.

Given the complexity of the issue, we must find creative solutions to

get the homeless in our state back to self-sufficiency. Senate Bill 5767, which I sponsored, calls on counties to create 10-year plans for reducing homelessness. Each task force must be comprised, among others, of representatives of the local government, community businesses and residents, social and health care services, law enforcement, schools, civic and faith organizations, and housing authorities, as well as a homeless or formerly homeless individual.

In addition to the plan to end homelessness, the task forces must establish guidelines for emergency shelters, temporary encampments and supportive housing. The guidelines must include provisions for public



notice of proposed homeless facilities, as well as health and safety standards for such facilities.

House Bill 2163 creates the revenue stream needed for counties to address this 10-year plan.

Homelessness affects all of us, and it will take a statewide effort to solve it.

Ensuring child safety

Each year, one in five children in the United States is sexually solicited online. I secured \$40,000 in the 2005-2007 operating budget to counteract this frighteningly common situation. The money will be used to develop a pamphlet for students and parents detailing ways for children to stay safe while using the Internet.

While the Internet can be a valuable research tool for children and a fun way to keep in touch with friends, there also are potential online pitfalls we need to help children avoid. Within the past few months, we've seen in our own state several high-profile cases in which children were abducted by adults they met online.

This Internet safety information campaign is the next step in my efforts to protect Washington children. On May 25, I joined Gov. Christine Gregoire as well as officials from the Washington State Patrol and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction School Safety Center in rolling out a child abduction prevention information campaign. Students around the state will receive information on how to avoid child abduction. I successfully requested \$25,000 in last year's budget for this project because

my work with the nonprofit child protection group Protect A Child Today (PACT) convinced me that we need to do more to shield our children from abduction.

Families can go to www.k12.wa.us to find the abduction prevention materials.

We also passed legislation this year to protect students by requiring school districts to ask for information about sexual misconduct from out-of-state job applicants. Last session, legislation passed requiring the information from in-state applicants.

Unfortunately, a measure I sponsored that would have required law enforcement officials to make a reasonable attempt to notify a parent or guardian when a child is taken into custody, and to allow the child to consult with that adult if they choose, did not pass the Legislature. Studies have shown that most children under the age of 14 and many aged 15 to 17 do not have the ability to fully understand the long-term consequences of waiving their rights upon being taken into police custody. We need safeguards in place to help ensure children are treated fairly in such situations.

Improving our roads

Residents of the 1st Legislative District know all too well the importance of safe, well-maintained roads. We rely heavily not only on Interstates 5 and 405, but on the entire Puget Sound transportation system to get to work and move around our communities safely and efficiently. I was proud to support a transportation package this year that makes significant investments in improving Washington's roads and mass transit systems.

The plan includes \$972 million to relieve traffic congestion and make interchange safety improvements along Interstate 405. This will help keep traffic moving smoothly along the freeway and keep overflow cars out of nearby neighborhoods.

It also includes \$18 million for a new south access to the University of Washington-Bothell/Cascadia Community College campus. The growing student body at this dual campus has led to the need for access to the campus from state Route 522. This interchange will relieve congestion at the north entrance while taking more vehicles off city streets. Direct access also will encourage the use of mass transit by providing a convenient route for buses.

The transportation budget is environmentally friendly: It includes \$814 million for public transportation options. Giving commuters more alternatives will go a long way toward cleaning up our air and cutting down on traffic. Specifically, we focused on commute trip reduction tax credits, which encourage employers to create programs that reduce drive-alone commuting. And we made significant investments in regional and commuter bus service; passenger rail; and park and ride lots.

Protecting our environment

The groundbreaking environmental legislation that gained approval this session will help preserve our state's unique environment for generations to come. Among the measures we approved:

- **Clean cars.** We made Washington the ninth state to adopt more rigorous auto emission standards. This will help clean up our air and improve public health.
- **Green buildings.** This cutting-edge measure requires publicly funded buildings to use modern

construction techniques resulting in a healthier environment. The standards emphasize efficient use of energy and water.

- **Oil spill prevention.** We established the Citizens' Oil Spill Advisory Council as a way to be more proactive in protecting our waterways. The council will review environmental safety issues to enhance oil spill prevention and ensure a rapid response in the event of an oil spill.

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The package also includes funding to replace the worn Alaskan Way Viaduct and the state Route 520 floating bridge. Both structures are at the ends of their useful lives.

The transportation package will be financed through reasonable user fees. The 9.5 cent increase in the gas tax will be phased in slowly during the next four years, along with small annual weight fees on passenger vehicles. The cost to the average driver will be around \$6 a month.

Capital budget:

Enhancing our educational and cultural resources

I was able to secure funding in the 2005-2007 capital budget to expand educational and cultural opportunities in our community:

- \$3 million for the 70,000-square-foot Cascadia Community College Center for Arts, Technology and Global Interaction, which will provide a state-of-the-art learning environment for interdisciplinary courses in the arts, languages, communications, technology and business.
- \$1 million for the Northshore Performing Arts Center, currently under construction on the Bothell High School campus.
- \$50,000 toward the Brightwater Community Environmental Education Center, located at the Brightwater regional wastewater treatment plant. The center would include environmental education programs and space for community use.

***Thanks to our
2005 legislative
pages!***



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